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ABSTRACT

Organizational characteristics of two universities and two public school systems, as these characteristics related to student teaching, were compared at two levels: (1) the formal, documented guidelines, or "what's supposed to happen"; and (2) the informal, working practices, or "what's really going on" in the settings. This paper reports on findings concerning the classroom level. The first section discusses major findings about formal university organizational characteristics which had a logical impact on student teaching. The second section examines more informal university characteristics which influenced student teaching. In the third section, major findings related to formal public school characteristics are discussed, and the fourth section reports on major findings related to informal school practices. Findings resulting from a review of observational data are presented in the fifth section and are categorized into four general groups according to whether behaviors of cooperating teachers and student teachers involved interaction, and if they paralleled, converged, or diverged over the course of the semester. An analysis of the student teaching experience in different contexts points out the critical importance of the cooperating teacher. (JD)

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THE CONTEXTS OF STUDENT TEACHING

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THE CONTEXTS OF STUDENT TEACHING

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the major findings of the Clinical Teacher Education-Preservice Study related to the contexts of student teaching. After a brief description of the sample and the methodology, comments will be made upon the findings related to the university and public school settings (discussed in more detail in Defino, Barnes, and O'Neal, Note 1, and Griffin, Barnes, Hughes, O'Neal, Defino, Edwards, and Hukill, Note 2). Organizational properties of the universities and public school systems, as these properties related to student teaching, were compared at two levels: (1) the formal, documented guidelines or "what's supposed to happen;" and, (2) the informal, working practices or "what's really going on" in the settings. The main focus of this paper, however, will be at the classroom level. One can argue that the cooperating teacher is most influential in introducing the student teacher to teaching and classroom responsibilities. In order to investigate this influence, comparisons between the observed teaching behaviors of both cooperating teachers and student teachers will be presented.

From a sample of nearly 200 cooperating teachers (CTs), university supervisors (USs), and student teachers (STs), a variety of data was gathered. These included published documents from each of two participating sites; demographic questionnaires; and repeated administrations of a battery of nine quantitative instruments measuring selected cognitive, philosophical, and psychological attributes of the participants. A smaller sample of 9 university supervisors, 20 cooperating teachers and 20 student teachers was drawn for more intense study. Journal entries, audiotaped conferences, interviews, and classroom observations were collected only from the intensive sample participants. This paper draws most heavily upon published documents

and demographic questionnaires completed by the larger sample, and interviews and classroom observations of the intensive sample. For a more detailed description of the study, especially the analysis of the qualitative data, consult Griffin, et al., (Note 2).

Participants in the study were located at two sites in urban areas with large and various ethnic populations. One teacher education institution, called State University for purposes of anonymity, was a large public university in a southwestern state; the other was a large private institution, called Metropolitan University, in a western state. Both have commendable reputations in teacher preparation. To protect the anonymity of the school districts involved, pseudonyms were also assigned to them. State University placed student teachers in two adjoining districts renamed the Lakeview district for this study while Metropolitan placed student teachers in the Urban district.

Major Findings Related to Formal University Organizational Properties

The most notable finding was a difference between the two sites in the length of the student teaching experience. Metropolitan required two semesters of student teaching while State required one. Also, at Metropolitan University a fifth year of study, leading to a masters degree, was required before a permanent credential was issued. At State University, a certificate was issued after completion of the baccalaureate degree.

A second distinction between the sites was the role orientation of the university supervisor. At the Metropolitan site, both the university and public school district contributed to the salaries of the four university supervisors, who held dual appointments. Possibly because they had been "master" teachers themselves, the supervisors still exhibited a predominant school district orientation even though they considered themselves to be in

career positions as supervisors. The university supervisors at State, in contrast, most often held half-time (20 hours per week) appointments. They identified with and were salaried by the university and often had only limited knowledge of the public school settings. One of the supervisors was a tenure-track faculty member and another was a non-tenure track specialist in supervision; the remainder were graduate students in the College of Education.

The supervisors at Metropolitan taught the required university methods classes concurrent to student teaching for which student teachers received credits toward their degrees. This was further evidence of status enjoyed by the Metropolitan supervisors. State supervisors, who were responsible for a weekly seminar related to student teaching, did not enjoy the same university status. The State university methods classes were normally taught by full-time faculty members.

This section has discussed the major findings about the formal university organizational properties which logically impacted student teaching. Attention will now turn to the more informal university characteristics which influenced student teaching.

Major Findings Related to Informal University Organizational Properties

The program in practice at Metropolitan can be described as personal in nature. This flavor seemed to be related to the smaller number of teacher education students at Metropolitan, which allowed the supervisors to become knowledgeable about and personally acquainted with them. Due to their longer tenure in the role, these supervisors also had an opportunity to become more knowledgeable about the practices and people associated with the public school settings. At State, the higher turnover rate among supervisors

combined with the relatively large number of education students mitigated against such familiarity.

This difference in flavor or style is best evidenced by the supervisory practices associated with each site. State had in place a formal observation/feedback system with accompanying observation records and feedback report forms for sharing among the members of each triad; i.e., each cooperating teacher-student teacher pair and the associated university supervisor. Besides an obvious communication function, the forms also provided concrete documentation which could be especially helpful if questions of accountability arose. If such a formal system was extant at Metropolitan, evidence of its implementation was not found in this study.

As part of the State observation/feedback system, regular observations were conducted every seven to ten days while Metropolitan supervisors were more varied in the timing of their "visits," with the norm being once every two weeks. These visits were often brief, informal observations, "popping in and out" of the classrooms to see "how things were going," in the words of several university supervisors. Feedback to the student teachers was more casual at Metropolitan, often communicated by notes left on lesson plans or short verbal exchanges.

Even though State had a more elaborate observation/feedback system designed to provide the student teachers with quality information on their performances, this did not result in supervision which was highly valued by the State student teachers. Those student teachers associated with Metropolitan, in contrast, were more satisfied with the quality of supervision they had received.

This section has reviewed the informal characteristics of the university setting. Next, findings related to the formal public school characteristics surrounding the student teaching experience will be discussed.

Major Findings Related to the Formal Public School Organizational Properties

Differences between the sites were noted both in programs related to ethnic populations and in socioeconomic status of the school populations. While both sites had some ethnic variety, the variety in the Urban district (associated with Metropolitan University) was much wider. At one exceptional school in the Urban district, 27 languages were represented in the student population. The variety in the Lakeview district (associated with State University) was much less and limited to Spanish-English bilingualism..

In the Urban district, bilingual programs (grades K-9) were present in 80% of the schools in the study sample. Correspondingly, 62% of the schools in the sample in Lakeview had bilingual programs (grades 1-5). A higher percentage (30%) of the schools in the Urban sample drew from predominantly low SES populations. For the Lakeview schools in the sample, 19% drew from low SES populations. In the Urban sample 40% of the schools drew from middle SES and 30% were equally mixed on SES levels. In contrast 13% of the Lakeview schools drew from predominantly high SES families and 68% from middle SES. On the whole, the Urban sample had a higher percentage of lower SES student represented (approximately 45%).

Another public school characteristic related to ethnic variety was the busing of students at both sites. Only a small percentage (12%) of the students in the Urban sample schools were bused, all on a voluntary basis. In contrast, 34% of the students in the Lakeview sample schools were bused in compliance with a court order to achieve racial balance within district schools.

A second major organizational property of the public schools where differences were noted between the sites related to the selection and training of cooperating teachers. At Lakeview cooperating teachers were usually chosen on a voluntary basis with accompanying approval of the building principal and possibly a district coordinator. Cooperating teachers received some training for the role, usually in the form of inservice workshops held to fulfill a state legislative requirement. Cooperating teachers also received $200 per year for working with student teachers. Although Lakeview was part of a regional organization of districts and universities which existed to regulate and coordinate student teaching, the influence of that organization was not apparent in practice in the data gathered for the study.

In the Urban district, a more rigorous process was employed to recruit new cooperating teachers. Potential cooperating teachers were invited to apply for the position. They then gave a demonstration lesson before the selection committee and were interviewed by that committee. Approval of the building principal was also necessary. Little or no special training for the role was provided cooperating teachers after they were selected. For their work as cooperating teachers, the Urban cooperating teachers received $10 per year.

This section has presented the major findings related to the formal organizational properties of the public schools. Next, the informal practices of the public schools which influence student teaching will be discussed.

Major Findings Related to the Informal Organizational Processes of the Public Schools

The most pervasive finding relative to the informal, day-to-day activities of student teaching in the school setting was the similarity of that experience across the various school settings. Student teaching as it was practiced consisted largely of the gradual assumption of teaching, planning, and management responsibilities by the student teacher. This culminated in "whole-day" or "total teach" where the student teacher assumed most of the classroom responsibilities. Even though student teachers became more responsible for the classroom activities, the amount of time when they were observed without the presence of the cooperating teachers in the classrooms was minimal.

Another pervasive finding related to student teaching in practice was the time pressure reported by the majority of all participants. University supervisors at both sites had comparable work loads in terms of numbers of students (12 student teachers for half-time supervisors at State; 25 student teachers for full-time supervisors at Metropolitan). However, the half-time university supervisors also carried nine hours of graduate work as a requirement of their position. Student teachers and cooperating teachers also reported time pressures; most cooperating teachers said they spent an extra hour per day on student teaching matters while student teachers said they spent an average of three hours per day preparing for student teaching.

The only major differences found between the sites in the practice of student teaching had to do with the degree of satisfaction expressed by the cooperating teachers with their own performances. At Urban 90% of the cooperating teachers expressed high levels of satisfaction with their own

work as cooperating teachers while at Lakeview only 10% expressed high levels of satisfaction.

This section has presented findings on the informal organizational processes of the public schools which characterized student teaching. Since the RITE staff did not expect individual teachers to publish guidelines or regulations to formally regulate student teaching, the staff chose to concentrate instead on the day-to-day activities of the classrooms, referred to here as the informal organizational properties of the classrooms. The next section describes the findings which resulted from what was observed in the classrooms.

Major Findings Related to the Informal Processes of the Public School Classroom

The major finding related to the context of the individual classroom setting was the similarity of teaching activities of both teachers in the particular classroom. Wider variations were found among classrooms, however. Since the individual classroom setting and the cooperating teachers are by folklore and research (Copeland, 1982) considered to be powerful influencers of student teaching, more detailed examination of these findings is warranted.

The findings characterizing the classroom setting drew upon the classroom observation data, specifically the teaching behaviors of both the cooperating teachers and the student teachers. The collection and analyses of those data are described more completely in Griffin, et al. (Note 2). Briefly, the observational data were analyzed for evidence of 41 variables of teaching behavior. These 41 variables were classified into the seven categories presented in Figure 1. Because of the significant, positive skewness of the data for the 41 individual variables (Snedecor & Cochran,

Instructional Management

1. Describes objectives
2. Direction-giving
3. Waits for attention
4. Monitors understanding
5. Individual assistance
6. Work quality and quantity
7. Offers explanations
8. Praises/acknowledges
9. Corrects: process/product
10. Refers to prior lesson content
11. Repeats main points
12. Motivates lesson
13. Cues attention, academic
14. Uses examples/demonstrates
15. Questioning

Managing Pupil Behavior

16. Rewards appropriate behavior
17. Cues appropriate behavior
18. Monitoring
19. Movement into/out of room

Appropriate Student Behavior

20. Students actively participate
21. Compliance with teacher requests
22. Student request for clarification
23. Student movement in room-general
24. Student movement in room-materials
25. Student-to-student communication

Inappropriate Student Behavior

26. Inappropriate student behavior

Teacher Reaction to Inappropriate Behavior

27. Cites rules/procedures
28. Nonverbal contact
29. Desist statement
30. Punishment, criticism
31. Ignores
32. Directs behaviors

Materials

33. In and out
34. Used by teacher
35. Incomplete
36. Insufficient quantity
37. Product

Administrative Activity

38. Grading
39. Makeup work
40. Roll
41. Other

Figure 1. Teaching Variables grouped by Category

1967), further statistical analyses of these variables beyond descriptive statistics were not conducted. By examining means and standard deviations for both cooperating teachers and student teachers for the 41 variables, some general patterns were evident. These patterns are reported as a means of suggesting questions for further research, rather than as the results of statistically rigorous investigation.

Findings related to the Behaviors of Cooperating Teachers and Student Teachers

The findings resulting from the analysis of the observational data fell into four general groups, those where behaviors of the cooperating teachers and student teachers (1) interacted, (2) paralleled, (3) converged, or (4) diverged over the course of the semester. These trends will each be discussed separately.

Interactive patterns of change. The most common pattern of change over time between cooperating teachers and student teachers was an interaction pattern, seen for 15 of the 41 variables examined. For three of the variables, the cooperating teacher exhibited the lower mean at the beginning of the semester and the higher mean at the end of the semester. For two variables, grading and roll taking, this trend was not surprising. As the student teachers assumed a more active role in the class over time, cooperating teachers often had more opportunity to sit and grade student work while they still maintained a presence in the room. The increased observation of the cooperating teacher taking roll may have again reflected the switch in roles in the classroom; often one of the first tasks delegated to the student teacher was roll taking. The cooperating teachers may have resumed conducting this task as the student teachers assumed more instructional and management responsibilities.

For one variable, the increase in cooperating teacher behavior and the decrease in student teacher behavior defies simple explanation. Over the semester, the student teacher used examples and demonstrated less often during instruction while the cooperating teacher increased in these behaviors. At this point, suggesting a reason for the trend would be pure speculation.

For 12 of the 15 variables showing an interaction, cooperating teachers exhibited a higher mean at the beginning of the semester and student teachers displayed the higher mean at the conclusion of the semester. This pattern may be easily explained given one basic assumption, that over the semester the student teachers gradually assumed more responsibility in the classroom. As a logical result, they exhibited an increase in recorded behaviors. In other words, the increased number of behaviors of the student teachers coupled with a decrease in the number of behaviors attributed to the cooperating teachers was to be expected. Behaviors which fell into this pattern included "Waits for Attention," "Referring to Prior Lesson Content," "Repeats Main Points," "Cues Academic Attention," "Questioning" (in the Instructional Management category); "Cues Appropriate Behavior" and "Movement Into/Out of Room" (Managing Pupil Behavior); "Students Actively Participate" (Appropriate Student Behavior); the categorical variable, Inappropriate Pupil Behavior; "Cites Rules/Procedures," "Nonverbal Contact," and "Directs Behavior" (Teacher Reaction to Inappropriate Student Behavior). The picture which emerged implied more assumption of responsibility in the classroom by the student teacher, who organized movement of students in coordination with other activities outside the classroom (reading lab, music class, etc.) and dealt more with inappropriate behaviors in addition to eliciting increased student participation in class. One could also argue that student teachers

adopted certain behaviors, exhibited by cooperating teachers during instruction and deemed "effective" in selected research (Barnes, Note 3); for example, reviewing, securing attention before beginning instruction, and asking questions. While these trends could reasonably be expected, other patterns are less easily explained.

Parallel patterns of change. On nine variables, cooperating teachers and student teachers both changed over time in a like manner. For two of these nine variables, both groups exhibited an increase in frequency. Means for both teacher groups increased over time for "Student Movement in Room--Materials" and "Materials In and Out." It would appear that teachers in this sample simply used more materials and allowed students in the room more freedom of movement in relation to obtaining or turning in materials as the semester progressed.

For the remaining seven variables showing parallel change over time, both cooperating teachers and student teachers decreased in the frequency of the behavior observed. The decrease for cooperating teachers again may be explained by their reduced activity in the classroom. In a general sense, however, the decrease for student teachers is more difficult to explain. Cooperating teachers still exhibited higher means than student teachers, even though means decreased for both groups, for "Monitors Understanding," "Praises/Acknowledges," "Compliance With Teacher Requests," "Desist Statements," and "Ignores." It should be noted that teachers' monitoring of students' understanding of both content and procedure in an assignment or lesson has been related to effective teaching (Barnes, Note 3). In like manner, although the research findings regarding academic praise are less clear (Brophy, 1981), common lore of present day classrooms includes the desirability of high rates of praise. The decrease in academic praise seems

more problematic when the increase in the rate of active participation in class by the students is recalled. The teachers may have been less likely to praise academically, when the decrease in the mean for both groups of teachers for the variable "Compliance With Teacher Requests" is considered. Students were apparently becoming less cooperative for both cooperating teachers and student teachers. This result may provide evidence for the cooperating teacher perception often voiced in interviews (Defino, et al., Note 1) that classroom management was very important. Some cooperating teachers, in fact, stated that one of the major problems with having a student teacher was resuming control of the class after the student teacher had left, with routines disrupted and standards unenforced. These cooperating teachers stated that they had to regain control of student behavior and reteach appropriate behaviors. In any case, both cooperating teachers and student teachers made fewer desist statements and ignored inappropriate behavior less often, even as the mean rate of inappropriate behavior remained stable over time. These teachers either chose some other reaction to inappropriate behavior as the semester progressed, or perhaps became less aware of it.

Both student teachers and cooperating teachers exhibited decreased rates of "Direction-giving" and "Administration of Makeup Work." Although both groups gave directions at lower rates over the course of the semester, the student teachers gave directions more often than did the cooperating teacher. This decrease would seem to be a logical one since students probably learned the routine of the classroom and the typical task requirements of the teacher (Doyle, Note 4) as the semester progressed. The higher mean rating for the student teachers may have reflected again the assumption of more activity in the classroom. The observation of the administration of makeup work was so

infrequent by both groups that no meaningful discussion of those results is possible.

Convergent patterns of change. On seven variables cooperating teachers and student teachers became more alike in the mean rate of behavior over time. One possible explanation for this trend would be mutual effects within each pairing. If, however, more time had been available and the trends had continued, an interaction pattern might have resulted similar to the type discussed earlier. If that were the case, some of these increases may be simply explained by the student teachers' assumption of more responsibility in the classroom. That possibility could explain the increase in means for student teachers over time on "Corrects: Process/Product," "Student Requests for Clarification," and "Student-to-Student Communication." The assumption of increased responsibility by the student teachers could also provide the simplest explanation for the decreases in means for the cooperating teachers on "Offers Explanations," "Monitoring," "Using Materials," and "Product."

Divergent patterns of change. On 10 of the 41 variables the cooperating teacher and student teacher became less alike as the semester progressed. In six cases the cooperating teachers exhibited a higher rate on a variable than their student teachers at the beginning of the semester; this difference had expanded by the conclusion of student teaching, in that the student teachers' rates decreased over time. In certain instances the student teachers did not adopt the "effective" teaching behaviors (Barnes, Note 3) employed by the cooperating teachers with increasing frequency. These included "Describes Objectives," "Work Quality and Quantity," "Motivates Lesson," and "Rewards Appropriate Behavior." The failure of student teachers to adopt and, in

fact, their diminished use of these behaviors is disappointing and requires further investigation before an adequate explanation can be offered. For these behaviors, modeling apparently was not powerful enough and appears to have been counterproductive. The means for cooperating teachers also increased in two other areas: "Punishment, Criticism" in response to inappropriate behavior and "Insufficient Quantity" of materials used. Both of these trends for cooperating teachers are disturbing and contrary to commonly recommended teaching practice (Emmer, Sanford, Evertson, Clements, & Martin, Note 5), although it should be noted that the mean frequency of occurrence for the latter behavior was quite low.

On four variables, student teachers displayed higher means than cooperating teachers at the first of the semester and still higher means at the end of the semester, while the cooperating teachers began and ended at a lower rate. Throughout the semester student teachers had higher means on "Individual Assistance," "Student Movement in Room--General," "Incomplete" handouts or materials, and "Other" administrative work (e.g., not grading, roll, or makeup work). Since student teachers often assumed paperwork tasks both as a help to the cooperating teacher and to become familiar with the class routine early in the semester (Defino, et al., Note 1), it is quite possible that the higher initial rate for student teachers reflects this early role assumption which was augmented over the semester. The same explanation seems reasonable for the student teachers' higher rates of individual assistance; student teachers often began to integrate themselves into the classroom by circulating and interacting with individuals as a first step toward assuming responsibility in the classroom. For student teachers neither the higher rates for general student movement nor the higher rate for use of incomplete materials are easily explained. The increased rate for the

use of incomplete materials is certainly contrary to generally accepted practice.

To summarize, the pattern of change where an interaction was present, and the student teachers were the ones who attained the higher mean at the end of the semester, was probably the logically expected pattern given the organization of the student teaching experience. The same may be said of the change pattern where cooperating teachers and student teachers converged. On the other hand, the pattern of change where the behavior rates of both cooperating teachers and student teachers decreased in a similar manner was more unexpected, especially since several of the variables for which frequencies decreased were those associated with "effective" teaching. Further investigation seems warranted both for the variables associated with this change pattern and for variables associated with the divergent pattern of change. Especially worthy of further investigation would be those variables ("Describes Objectives," "Work Quality and Quantity," "Motivates Lesson," and "Rewards Appropriate Behavior") where the student teachers displayed lower mean rates as time went on while the cooperating teachers had increasing rates.

One other finding emerged from a more general look at the observation data across categories which should be included in order to provide a more complete picture of the contextual setting. A gradual "relaxation" of order in the classroom was documented as student teachers assumed responsibility for the classroom. The classrooms were characterized by (1) more student movement around the room, in general, (2) more use of incomplete materials, (3) more inappropriate student behavior, (4) more student-to-student communication, and (5) less compliance with teacher's requests. Even as the

cooperating teachers were teaching less and less, the frequencies of their statements of punishment and criticism increased.

Conclusions

Given these findings for the informal operations of the classroom level of student teaching and for formal and informal organizational properties of the sites, what conclusions can be logically drawn?

Although a variety of contexts were represented in the study at different institutional levels, the character of the student teaching experience was more similar than different across the settings. This similarity is supported by the commonalities across sites found in conference, journal, and narrative data (Griffin, et al., Note 2).

One qualitative difference in the student teaching experience should be noted, however. The participants often reported a perceived need for student teachers to experience a wider variety of school settings - different SES setting, different ethnic populations, different classroom climates, and so on. The two-semester experience at Metropolitan did further attainment of one programmatic goal of student teaching, the provision of a varied experience in the "real world" classroom.

The most marked differences seen in the practice of teaching occurred at the classroom level, where wide variations were exhibited. Student teachers generally tended to behave in a manner easily explained by their assumption of responsibilities in the classrooms, with behaviors similar to those of their cooperating teachers, both in kind and in degree, on most of the variables examined.

This adoption of behaviors associated with a particular classroom setting is similar to that reported by Copeland (1982). Copeland found that student teachers had adopted behaviors either through cooperating teachers'

modeling or upon cooperating teachers' recommendations. In the present study student teachers may have adopted behaviors of their cooperating teachers again through the cooperating teachers' recommendations: in the conferences cooperating teachers made most of the comments (72%) and during that time offered student teachers information on methods and materials for specific teaching tasks. While a modeling effect is certainly a plausible additional explanation for the student teachers' adoption of cooperating teachers' behaviors, direct evidence of presence of the modeling phenomenon in this study was not found in other data sources. In fact, for some behaviors modeling appeared to have a negative effect. Although Copeland was able to identify an implied classroom pupil effect upon student teachers' behaviors, this study did not address that question.

Summary

This paper has presented the major findings related to both formal and informal institutional contexts of student teaching and the findings related to the more immediate classroom settings. The importance of the cooperating teacher has been validated once again. To those in teacher education, this implies careful consideration of the contextual settings, especially the immediate classroom and teaching environments, where student teachers are placed for their opportunities to practice.

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